

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The 2013/2014 Tulare County Grand Jury initiated an investigation on domestic violence with the goal of raising awareness of domestic abuse and how a victim may access the many outreach service programs available in the county. Physical violence is not the only type of domestic abuse. The report describes a variety of types of abuse and the fact that anyone, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, marital or economic status may become a victim. A national hotline phone number was provided in the report for any victim needing assistance in developing a safety plan. The Grand Jury required a response by the Tulare County District Attorney to their recommendation that the District Attorney's office apply for any grants that may be available for providing services to the victims of domestic violence.



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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August 20, 2014

**The Honorable Judge Gary Paden**  
County Civic Center, Room 303  
221 S. Mooney Blvd.  
Visalia, CA 93291

**Tulare County Grand Jury**  
5963 S. Mooney Blvd.  
Visalia, CA 93277

**Tulare County Board of Supervisors**  
2800 West Burrel Avenue  
Visalia, CA 93291

RE: Response to 2013-2014 Tulare County Grand Jury Final Report

Dear Sirs:

The Office of the District Attorney is committed to fighting domestic violence and I am very pleased the Grant Jury selected this as a topic.

The report recommends that the Office of the District Attorney apply for any grants that may be available for providing services to the victims of domestic violence. Penal Code §933.05 provides guidance for responding to a Grand Jury report and states that we are to either agree or disagree with the *finding*. However, since we weren't mentioned in the findings, but were mentioned in the recommendation section, this response applies to the *recommendation*.

The Office of the District Attorney agrees with said recommendation. Currently, we utilize grant funding for exactly these purposes. Our Office has been serving victims of domestic violence and other crimes since 1996, through our Victim/Witness Assistance Division (VW Division). The VW Division annually serves over 2,500 crime victims, roughly 25% of them domestic violence victims. Our victim advocates offer all of the mandatory services pursuant to Penal Code §13835, including case status updates, an orientation to the criminal justice system, referrals for counseling, and crisis intervention among many others.

The VW Division is funded with a combination of six grants and contracts. We have been the recipient of the Violence Against Women Vertical Prosecution grant from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) for more than a decade. This competitive grant (only 12 are awarded statewide) is made possible through federal funding from the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA's purpose is to enhance or create specialized units to vertically prosecute cases involving violent crimes against adult women, including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking and/or human trafficking including sexual assault. Our office funds three prosecutors, one victim advocate, and one investigator with this grant. The victim advocate provides services to victims of the most serious cases of felony domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Services to victims of other domestic violence crimes are provided by advocates funded with both Victim/Witness Assistance Program and Underserved program grants (both competitive grants through Cal OES).

Further assistance to victims is provided through our claims specialists, who file claims for financial assistance on behalf of these crime victims. Funding for these efforts is provided through contracts with the Victims Claim and Government Compensation Board.

In the Background section of the report, the Grand Jury states, *"It is a civic responsibility to inform the men, women, and children who have been victimized, of the services available in Tulare County."* We could not agree more, which is why community outreach is a priority in our office. The VW Division's advocates provide numerous presentations to schools and other organizations about domestic violence prevention, including teen domestic violence presentations to schools, as well as attend several community events to provide outreach about our services.

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. From articles in the local newspapers to radio commercials, we send a clear message that our community will not tolerate domestic violence abuse. In an effort to raise both awareness and funding for the two local domestic violence shelters (Family Services Tulare County and Central California Family Crisis Center), we debuted a 5K run and walk called "The Justice Run" three years ago and it has become a galvanized annual event. We participate in community events, such as 210 Connect forums, where we engage the audience in information, education, and how we can work collectively to reduce this crime in our community.

Our Office spearheads the Tulare County Domestic Violence Task Force. The Task Force consists of twenty agencies, including all of the family resource centers, the two domestic violence shelters in Tulare County, several nonprofit agencies, County departments (Probation & HHS), and local law enforcement. Maintaining this network of domestic violence stakeholders is vital to adequately address this issue in Tulare County.

Page Three

Thank you for spotlighting and investigating this crime which can destroy families and lives. We will continue to do our part to enhance our efforts and work collectively with agencies as committed to ending domestic violence as we are.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Ward", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Tim Ward

TW:rg



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COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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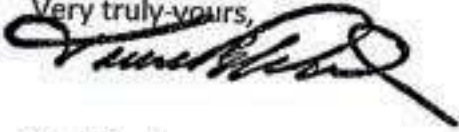
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